

COMMENTS

ON THE

Ten Commandments.
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THE SECOND EDITION.

CHICHESTER:

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TO THE SOCIETY FOR
PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
IN
CHICHESTER.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

IT is with the utmost pleasure that I embrace this opportunity of paying you my respects, and of congratulating you on the unexpected success with which

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DEDICATION.

your pious endeavours to promote the influence of Religion have been happily attended. It affords me indeed the most exalted satisfaction, that our infant institution has been honoured with NAMES that must give credit to any undertaking, and has been productive of important advantages to the poor objects for whose everlasting benefit it was established. In pursuance of the laudable design in which we have all engaged, permit me
to

DEDICATION.

to lay the following trifle at
your feet, and to assure you
that should it tend to excite
but ONE Sentiment of virtue
in the breast of a single fel-
low-creature, I shall be hap-
py to reflect that I have not
lived in vain.

I am,

LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient,

Most devoted humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.

Chichester, Nov. 22, 1780.

PREFACE.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

*I*T is unnecessary to observe, that the author of the following short Comments is no candidate for literary fame: But as it may appear presumptuous in him to add to the numberless productions which have been published on this subject, he begs leave to urge in his defence, that something seemed still wanting, easy to be purchased, and easy to be understood, which might instruct the young and unexperienced without creating disgust or languor. If this purpose be answered, he is little solicitous what judgment

P R E F A C E.

ment the censorious may pass upon him, the uprightness of his intention is a sufficient security: And so far from endeavouring to allure by the charms of Novelty, he wishes only to point out the good old path, unknown to some, and disregarded by others; that path, in which he who walketh shall find peace and quietness, and assurance for ever.

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COMMENTS, &c.

First and Second Commandment.

THOU shalt have none
other Gods but me.

THOU shalt not make
to thyself any graven Image,
nor the likeness of any
thing that is in heaven a-
bove, or in the earth be-
neath, or in the water un-
der the earth. Thou shalt
not bow down to them nor
B worship

worship them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, of them that hate me, and shew mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments.

IN the first and second Commandment we are forbidden to worship any but the true God, and that we might not worship *him* after a false manner, we are strictly commanded not to make any Figure

gure or Resemblance with an intent to use it as an Object of Adoration. These injunctions were more immediately necessary for the Jews, because they were surrounded by idolatrous nations, and were often corrupted by them. In our times, and under the happy influence of Christianity as established in this nation, it may seem superfluous to caution men against the breach of these two commandments; for to whom can our worship be paid, but to the all-supreme Divinity, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to our Almighty Creator, to whom we

owe our existence, with all its various blessings; to our compassionate Redeemer, who left the *bosom of his Father* to deliver us from the curse due to our sins, and to purchase for us eternal life; and lastly, to the Holy Ghost the Comforter, by whom we are daily sanctified, who assists us under all the difficulties of our christian warfare, and by his divine influence makes us meet to be partakers of an inheritance with the Saints in light. We transgress both these commandments in a distant degree, when we love the Creature more
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than the Creator; when we disparage his wisdom, or distrust his goodness; when we rely on human means, regardless of him, who, to convince us that he ruleth over all, often *casteth out the counsel of Princes, and maketh the Devices of the People to be of none effect*. He who is jealous of his honor claims the chief place in our affections, and will be served with all the faculties both of soul and body. The sanction with which the second commandment concludes, has offended some, and alarmed others; but what has the Almighty threatened
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to Idolators, or promised to his faithful Worshipers, which must not often happen in the ordinary dispensations of his Providence, in the common course of human affairs? We are all liable to suffer from the vices, or even the follies and indiscretions of our parents: their bad example may have the most pernicious influence on our conduct; it may encourage us in the same pursuits, and at length involve us in the same unhappy consequences. On the other hand, wealth and reputation, and every earthly blessing, may attend those, who,

who, by the honest labours and good instructions of the persons who brought them into being, are enabled to be useful in their generations, and to shine as lights in the world.

Third Commandment.

THOU shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain

AMONG the many endowments by which man is distinguished from other parts of the visible creation,

creation, there is scarce any more important than that of *Speech*; and perhaps it will be difficult to find a blessing that is so often and so wantonly abused. It is every day prostituted to the purposes of irreligion and profaneness, and is become, in the expressive language of an apostle, a *World of Iniquity*. How common is it to hear the Father of the Universe treated with the grossest irreverence and disrespect, in order to embellish the discourse of some empty blasphemer, to adorn the most disgusting vanity, and to dignify the meanest impertinence.

pertinence. And who without horror can hear a profligate wretch calling down damnation on himself, and invoking the Almighty to inflict on him the most intolerable of punishments--the torments of Hell. I know these sins are sometimes excused under the softer title of *inconsideration*; but how absurd is this plea! Shall the awful name of God, which Angels and Archangels, and all the Company of Heaven adore, shall HIS NAME be used by the lowest of his rational creatures *without a meaning*? Or shall he who intreats the Almighty

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to plunge him into all the miseries of eternal death, affect to tell us that he *intends nothing* by such presumptuous, such unnatural impieties? What is this but to mock the Majesty of Heaven, and to trifle with omnipotence itself? Were we to resolve all religion into mere *morality*, and adopt the visionary systems of some *modern refiners*, even *they* would pronounce against the sinner we have been describing, and acknowledge that he is without excuse: For it is hardly possible that he who has accustomed himself to treat his Law-giver with contempt,

contempt, or want of reverence, should pay the least regard to his laws, however wise, or however salutary. It may be considered too, that the sins above-mentioned are often accompanied by others very offensive to God, and highly prejudicial in their effects; anger, bitterness, and revenge itself are often attendant upon them: so just is the remark of our blessed Lord, that *whatsoever is more than yea, yea, or nay, nay, cometh of evil*; that is, arises from some unhappy irregularity of disposition, from an overheated imagination, or an over-

bearing forwardness. In matters of *greater moment*, to bring the God of Truth nearer to our Contemplation, (though he be not far from every one of us) *Oaths* are, and ought to be permitted; nor is the shocking indecency with which they are sometimes administered, any excuse for our inattention. The Lord is King, be the people ever so regardless of his power, or forgetful of his majesty.

Fourth

Fourth Commandment.

REMEMBER that thou keep holy the Sabbath-Day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates : For in six days the Lord made heaven
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ven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

IN this commandment all persons are strictly enjoined to keep the Sabbath-day holy. He who knoweth our infirmities, foresaw, that unless some larger portion of time was devoted to his service, every religious impression would gradually wear away. We are so captivated with the vanities of the world, that we are too apt to forget

get the Creator of it : It was therefore judged necessary that the seventh day should be wholly employed in works of Religion and Charity, in the public and private worship of Almighty God, in instructing our children and servants in their more sacred and solemn duties, in the perusal of the Holy Scriptures, and other pious books, and lastly, in visiting the sick poor, in mitigating their pains, and relieving their various wants and distresses. And here it may be proper to observe, that it is more especially incumbent on the civil magif-

magistrate to prevent, by his most active exertions, the profanation of the Sabbath. It is *his* duty to visit, or cause to be visited, all public houses within his jurisdiction, on the Lord's Day ; that while the rational and grateful part of the community are joining in the worship of the Supreme Being, his Name may not be profaned, or his Majesty insulted, by the Blasphemies and Imprecations of profligate men. Let it be farther considered, that most of those wretches who have been brought to a public and shameful death, have acknowledged-

knowned that their sinful courses began in the profanation of the Sabbath; in the neglect of those duties by which piety is animated, by which virtue is strengthened, by which grace is obtained, by which, in short, that spiritual armour is acquired and preserved, which may enable every one of us to *withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Fifth Commandment.

HONOUR thy Father and
thy Mother, that thy
days may be long in the
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land which the Lord thy
God giveth thee.

THE Duty of Children to their
Parents is frequently and strongly
enforced in Holy Scripture. They
are to respect and honor them as
the persons to whom, under God,
they owe their very being. They
are to attend to their good instruc-
tions, and obey whatever reasona-
ble commands shall be laid upon
them. They are to assist and com-
fort them in sickness and distress,
and particularly under the wants
and infirmities of old age. On the
other

other hand, there are Duties, and very *awful ones* too, required from Parents to their Children. They are to watch over their morals with the strictest care, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and, above all, they are to set them a *good example*; for without this their admonitions will be so far from having a proper effect, that they will expose *them*, and Religion itself, to contempt. And let parents seriously consider what may be their punishment in another state, if their children should finally miscarry through *their* means

Let them apply to themselves the declaration of the Almighty to the prophet EZEKIEL, *Son of man, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.*

Reverence is due under this commandment not only to a parent, but to all those who are put in authority over us; the magistrate, the teacher, the spiritual pastor, are our deputed parents, and are appointed to perform those offices which our natural parents want either

ther the ability or the opportunity to perform. But in vain are such offices transferred to others, unless a suitable degree of honor, deference, and attention accompany them. Finally, as respect is due to our *inferiors themselves*, inasmuch as they are created in the image of God, partakers of the same privileges, and the same hopes, as they are by their industry our benefactors, as their labour contributes to our ease, their anxiety to our enjoyment, we hereby see the propriety of the apostle's injunction, that we should *all of us be subject one to another*.

Sixth Commandment.

THOU shalt do no murder.

NOT only the enormous crime of taking away life is forbidden here, but whatever has a tendency to increase the calamities of life, as *Malice, Hatred, Revenge, Jealousy,* and the like: *Whosoever hateth his Brother, says St. JOHN, is a Murderer:* And our blessed Lord informs us, that all, the most *distant approaches* to this crime must be carefully avoided, or they will expose

pose men to certain punishment. He commands us to *love even our Enemies*, to *do good* to our very *Persecutors*, and *to pray for them that despitefully use us*. It is the duty and interest of a christian to suppress the first motions of resentment, and to forgive from the bottom of his heart the most unprovoked attacks on his person and reputation: For “ of him who “ hopes to be *forgiven*, it is indispensibly required that he *forgive*.” If we have no power over the lives of others, we have as little over our own. A proper contempt

tempt of life when the service of our Creator or our Country requires it, is a true characteristic of the martyr and the hero; but he, who giving way to despondency, hastens out of this world into another, may be justly compared to a soldier, who, alarmed by the dangers and difficulties of that station which his commander has allotted him, should prepare not to overcome them by constancy and perseverance, but to avoid them by cowardice and by flight. It has been well observed, that the Almighty will receive no souls but such as he
calls

calls to himself; and we should resolve with holy Job, to *wait all the days of our appointed time till our change come.*

Seventh Commandment.

THOU shalt not commit
Adultery.

THE crime of Adultery, a crime which under the mosaic law was punished with death, and which is big with the most fatal consequences to the welfare of society, and to the happiness of individuals, is not the only one which is forbid-

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den here; Fornication, Uncleanneſs, and Impurities of every kind, are to be carefully and conſcientiouſly avoided. Our Saviour has extended this precept to our very Deſires and Intentions; for *whoſoever looketh upon a woman to luſt after her*, and wants nothing perhaps but the opportunity to complete his purpoſes, *has committed Adultery with her already in his heart*. The God of Purity requires that we ſhould be chaſte in *Thought*, in *Word*, and in *Deed*.

The miſchiefs of a contrary conduct muſt be obvious to the moſt inconfiderate

inconsiderate mind: Health, wealth, and character are madly sacrificed in the temple of lasciviousness, and Seduction has been very properly stiled *Spiritual Murder*; for though it may not take away life, it takes away every thing by which life is rendered desirable, and leaves behind it a train of calamities infinitely more to be dreaded than death itself. And here too the civil power is called upon to prevent one of the most dangerous incitements to the breach of this precept, I mean those seminaries of debauchery of which we have so many instances in this coun-

try. It is the duty of the Magistrate to draw forth as *examples* those veterans in iniquity, who make a trade of prostitution, and a too easy prey of unthinking innocence. It is from their artful and mercenary contrivances, that we see men, who might have been ornaments to human nature, rushing on without remorse from vice to vice, and at length falling victims to the violated laws of their country; that we behold many an unhappy parent weeping over the ruin of his own offspring, and many a wretched female thrown helpless and destitute on the world, and at last

last ending a miserable existence amidst the very scenes of infamy, and under every circumstance that can aggravate the horrors of dissolution.

Eighth Commandment.

THOU shalt not Steal.

IN this commandment not only Theft, but also all fraudulent Dealings with our Neighbour are strictly forbidden. Every species of *Injustice* by which the property of another is affected, must be cautiously guarded against: We are not to over-reach one another in the common course
of

of trade: We must not contract debts which we are unable to pay, or refuse the payment of them when it is in our power. In short, there is one maxim, the constant observance of which will always secure us against the breach of this precept, to *do unto others as we wish they should do unto us.*

Ninth Commandment.

THOU shalt not bear False Witness against thy Neighbour.

IN this commandment is forbidden not only the grosser act of bearing

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ing False Witness against our Neighbour upon *Oath*, but also all malevolent attacks upon his good name. We are neither to delight in propagating or in hearing any thing to the prejudice of another. When the infirmities of our fellow-creatures are brought forward to our view, we should turn our thoughts upon ourselves, consider what are our own faults, and endeavour to amend them. The fall of our neighbour should not be a matter of triumph, but of caution to us. And perhaps such questions as these, when seriously put to our own hearts, would
 effec-

effectually silence our animadversions
 on other men. “ Is the crime I am
 “ disposed to censure in another, *one*
 “ to which I myself have any pro-
 “ pensity? If not, where is the me-
 “ rit of my abstaining from it? If
 “ I *have* a propensity to it, how do
 “ I know but that under the like
 “ circumstances I should have fallen
 “ as he did? or if I have resolutely
 “ maintained my ground against
 “ every attack on my virtue, by
 “ whose assistance have I done all
 “ this? Is it not by the Grace of God
 “ that I am what I am?” Thus we
 see that the faults of our neighbour,
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in whatever light we view them, can afford no ground for severity of censure, but should rather excite our gratitude to Heaven for our own escape. In short, let us always remember, that charity, which *believeth all things*, which *hopeth all things* favourable to the reputation of others, is the grand and distinguishing mark of Christ's Disciples ; it is the cement of social happiness, it is the vital principle of all religion.

Tenth Commandment.

THOU shalt not covet
thy neighbours house,
thou shalt not covet thy
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neighbours wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

THE most effectual remedy against actual sin is to guard the heart against the first motions to it. This last commandment therefore is wisely calculated to prevent the commission of crimes, by forbidding us inordinately to *covet* or *desire* any thing belonging to others. When we seek after no advantage or gratification to the detriment of our fellow-creatures, we shall perform all the

the relative and social duties with diligence and chearfulness; we shall render to all their dues, and owe no man any thing but to love one another. Let us then never forget, for there is no consideration more truly awful, that all things, even the inmost recesses of the human mind, are continually *open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*: That *He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways*, and consequently that it is our most important duty to suppress all the irregular workings of our corrupt nature, and to *keep our hearts with all diligence,*

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diligence, since out of them are the issues of life.

T H E E N D .



Lately was published,

A Serious Address to Housekeepers.

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